

Remarks

The applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended in the interview of October 19, 2005 and for his consideration of the present application.

In the telephone interview, the undersigned explained how the prior art, and in particular the cited Patterson et al. reference, could not anticipate the claims. The undersigned also explained the advantages of the current invention. Composites typically require less maintenance and provide a lower risk of exposure to harmful chemicals than pressure-treated lumber. The use of pressure-treated wood or other lumber products is, however, still desirable in portions of a deck, since they typically provide more strength than comparably priced composites. If, for example, a deck were made using composites where strength was not needed and pressure-treated wood where strength was needed, the deck would have a non-uniform appearance, would still require a high-level of maintenance, and would still expose deck users to leaching chemicals.

Thus, the present invention solves these problems by providing the strength of a natural wood product with the advantages of a composite, in such a way that products as claimed herein would provide a uniform appearance when used with all-composite products.

During the discussion, the Examiner raised the issue of obviousness and suggested adding more limitations to the claims.

In the Office action of September 19, 2005, all the claims were rejected as being anticipated by Patterson '230. As noted above, Patterson does not teach the use of a lumber substrate. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the current claims overcome the rejection and are patentable.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the fees filed, asserted to be filed or which should have been filed herewith to our Deposit Account No. 19-4972. Applicants request reconsideration of the rejected claims and a notice of allowance. The Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned if any matters remain outstanding so that they may be resolved expeditiously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy M. Murphy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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